



February 2016

Grapevine

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Try a Wine & Cheese Pairing for Your Next Soirée

Birds and flowers, jeans and cashmere, Fred and Ginger: They are more than enough on their own, but together, some couples make enchanting music. Wine and cheese comprise another such irresistible duet. And just like food and wine pairing, there are characteristics that make certain wines and cheeses excellent together.

An article in the scientific journal *Current Biology* on the perceptual effect of consuming astringent and fatty substances supports the cultural practice of pairing certain beverages and foods and of palate cleansing. So what, you may say; but this study and others like it endorse centuries of cultural practices that make sense of why a jammy red Zin puts out the fire of spicy barbecue sauce, while complimenting the sweetness. Which also raises the question of whether you belong to the like-like or opposites camp. Before access to imports worldwide was so finger-snapping simple, wines and foods from the same regions were the norm. We'll mix up tradition and modernity by offering some zone-similar and cross-cultural pairings.

Cabernet Sauvignon, full-bodied and dry, can have notes of blackberries, vanilla and tobacco. Its boldness demands a cheese that can stand up to it. An extra sharp cheddar, with its sometimes-crystalline-crunch or aged Gouda would do the trick.



Malbec can be earthy and barnyard-y or more complex, with black fruit, leather and smoke. Taleggio's strong smell, mild taste and fruity tang would squarely meet Malbec, without overpowering it.

Light- to medium-bodied Pinot Noir with ripe red fruit flavors, sometimes backed by earth, cola or mushrooms is perfect for nutty, subtly sweet Gruyère. And if you want a geographical pairing, try a red Burgundy, aka Pinot Noir, with Comté, its French cousin.

Chianti, most commonly made from the Sangiovese grape, comes from Tuscany. Its spicy and herbaceous flavors, acidity, tannins and mouthwatering fruit would strike a sublime balance with Reggiano Parmigiano's salty, nutty richness and granular, nubby texture.

Riesling, often underestimated, can be a show-stopper,

running the spectrum of dry to sweet and with plentiful punches of peaches, apricots and sharply balanced acidity. A sweeter Riesling would counter Feta's salty crumbly texture, while a drier would tango with a firmer Drunken Goat.

Dry Rosé possess a complex array of flavors from tomato leaf to strawberries and is light-to medium-bodied. While often and for good reason paired with crisp Sauvignon Blanc, a fresh goat cheese would be delicious with Rosé's acidity, and the cheese's tang would harmonize with the wine's bright fruit. Working both the like-like and opposing angles, it would be a solid marriage.

It can and should be argued that Champagne goes with everything, but for the purposes of your wine and cheese party, consider an unctuous, ripened cheese like Brie or Camembert. For a

lighter Champagne, go with Brie's milder flavor; while a nuttier, yeastier bubbly would hold its own with Camembert.

The logs are still snap-crackling and your lingering friends are waiting for the final unveiling. Show the diehards the ultimate finale with a Port and Stilton or Gorgonzola pairing. Its deep, rich sweetness is a supreme foil for your favorite blue cheese. You might opt for a Tawny, Ruby or Vintage Port, depending on taste and budget; and if you want to get really particular, try a Tawny with Roquefort, Ruby with Gorgonzola and Vintage Port with Stilton. The subtleties and marked differences will teach you much about both the wines and the cheeses.

Beat the mid-winter chill by bringing together wine, cheese and friends. Any of these cheeses can be found easily, and of course you know where to find the wine. Cheers! ♦

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Did you know...According to the article cited, "multiple sips of a mild astringent solution, similar to a wine or tea, decrease oral fat sensations elicited by fatty food consumption...Consequently, we reveal a principle underlying the international practice of *palate cleansing*."

Wine Tastings Fri, 4-7 & Sat, 2-5

Sat 2/20, 2/27 & 3/5: New Arrivals

Fri & Sat 2/12 & 2/13: Wines for Valentine's Day: A special two-day extravaganza of beautiful wines to toast the one you love.

Fri 2/19: February Staff Picks: Our February favorites to brighten up your mid-winter blues and ease into the not-so-far off Spring.

Fri 2/26: 90s Value Wines: More of our ever-expanding selection of 90s wines at great prices.

Fri 3/4: Spring Harvest South of the Equator: It's harvest time in South America, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. We'll feature their latest.

Sheila's Friends Down South

Again this year on Sheila's January trip to Florida, she met up with her friend, Tim Laird, CEO — Chief Entertaining Officer — and brand spokesman for Brown-Forman, a major producer of fine wines and spirits. He is also the author of *That's Entertaining!* and has a new book coming out. Accompanied by the Florida sunset, Tim tried out Valentine's Day dinner and cocktail pairings on Sheila and other friends from his newest book and which he recently shared on a Valentine's Day ABC news spot. Ask her about it the next time you're in!



Lobster Mac n' Cheese

Kosher salt
1 pound cavatappi or elbow macaroni
1 quart milk
8 Tbsp (1 stick) unsalted butter, divided
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
12 oz Gruyere cheese, grated (4 cups)
8 oz extra-sharp Cheddar, grated (2 cups)
1/2 tsp freshly ground black pepper
1/2 tsp nutmeg
1 1/2 lbs cooked lobster meat
1 1/2 cups fresh white bread crumbs (5 slices, crusts removed)



Preheat oven to 375 F. Bring large pot of salted water to boil. Add pasta, cook according to directions and drain. Meanwhile, heat the milk in a small saucepan, but don't boil it. In a large pot, melt 6 Tbsp of butter and add the flour. Cook over low heat for 2 minutes, stirring. Still stirring, add the hot milk and cook for a minute, until thickened and smooth. Off the heat, add Gruyere, Cheddar, 1 Tbsp salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Add the cooked macaroni and lobster and stir well. Place the mixture in 6 to 8 individual gratin dishes.

Melt remaining 2 Tbsp butter, combine with the fresh bread crumbs, and sprinkle on the top. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes, or until the sauce is bubbly and the macaroni is browned on the top. The lobster and cream sauce make this cheese-laden dish versatile but white-centered. Champagne or Sheila's pick of the month would be divine.

English Rose Cocktail

Courtesy of mixthatdrink.com

The English Rose Cocktail is gorgeous as well as tasty. It contrasts the sweetness of apricot brandy and grenadine with gin, dry vermouth and lemon.



INGREDIENTS

White or gold sugar for rimming glass
1 1/2 oz apricot brandy
3 oz gin
1 1/2 oz dry vermouth
2 tsp grenadine
1/2 tsp lemon juice

DIRECTIONS

Rim two cocktail glasses with sugar — or gold sugar, if you find yourself in a specialty store. Fill a cocktail shaker with ice and add remaining ingredients. Shake well and strain into the glass. Garnish with a cherry and toast the one you love.

February 2016 Staff Wine Picks

Sheila: 2014 Francis Ford Coppola Diamond Collection Black Label Pavilion Chardonnay (Sonoma) \$14.49 (reg \$16.99) Aromatic of warm spices with a lush palate and creamy finish. *Lobster mac 'n cheese, featured above

Max: 2014 Milcampos Tempranillo (Spain) \$12.99 (reg \$14.99) With intense aromas of blackberries and blueberries, it is medium bodied with a long, smooth finish. *Cured Spanish Iberico ham, Manchego cheese and olives

Ian: 2013 Giacomo Mori Chianti (Toscana) \$13.99 (reg \$15.99) **92 AG** Black cherry, pomegranate, cloves, lavender, leather and spice abound in this beautifully crafted wine. *Spaghetti Bolognese with Reggiano Parmigiano

Bill: 2013 Felino Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza) \$15.49 (reg \$17.99) **91 JS** Stunning fruit with currants, nuts and milk chocolate. Full bodied, with firm tannins and a fruity finish. *Grilled lamb burger with aged cheddar

Damian: 2012 Peju Merlot (Napa Valley) \$29.99 (reg \$38.99) A luscious wine with plum, cola and anise flavors. Blended with a touch of Malbec, it is soft and full with gentle tannins. *Tagliatelle with duck ragu and fontina

Karen: 2012 Marrenon Doria (Rhône Valley) \$10.99 (reg \$12.99) **90 RP** A blend of Vermentino, Grenache Blanc and Roussanne, it is lovely, with apricots, minerals and white flowers. *Coquille St. Jacques with Gruyere